

## Patent Application of

Jon C. Cox

for

TITLE: Flexible Blanket Retaining Device with Interchangeable TopBACKGROUND (FIELD OF INVENTION):

This invention relates primarily to devices intended to retain in place a beach blanket, towel, or other reasonably sized ground covering, once it is fixed to the ground. It additionally relates to serving as a medium to display advertising and/or personal interests.

DESCRIPTION OF PRIOR ART:

The problem is that of a beach blanket being disturbed from its original position, either by the wind or, by the deliberate or incidental actions of a person or persons. This problem has been partially solved by various combinations of staking and clamping or by weighted devices, but these either lack functionality or are unnecessarily complicated and difficult to manufacture. Several inventors have devised ways to maintain a beach blanket or towel's position. U.S. patent 5,832,672 to Griffiths (1998) discloses a device for anchoring a blanket or towel in a fixed position on the ground, beach or other unpaved earth. Griffiths' device includes a removably attachable clip member. U.S. patent 5,712,383 to Ramirez (1998), U.S. patent 5,524,309 to La Barbera (1996) and U.S. patent 5,579,798 to Pruitt (1996) all provide devices wherein the clip means is or is fixed to the upper portion of the stake/clip apparatus. All of the aforementioned devices lack resiliency between the stake (anchoring means) and the clip (retaining means), thereby disallowing flexibility with regards to the movement of the subject being retained in place. The point of advertising was addressed by U.S. patent 3,935,653 to Klein (1976), wherein Klein displays a placard, which provides a means of advertising. However, the position of the placard lends itself to difficulty in being viewed. Applicable to all discoverable prior art is a deficiency in functionality relating to accommodating variances in the depth of the soil/substance into which said stake means is driven. In instances of shallow support, the corners of the retained towel or blanket will be raised, resulting in a lack of flushness with the surface onto which it is being retained.

**SUMMARY OF INVENTION:**

It is the object of the present invention to provide an assembly that addresses the need to maintain a beach blanket or towel in its original position, with the flexibility and resiliency to accommodate: 1) a variance in the depth of the supporting soil/substance, 2) a reasonable amount of movement of the towel, caused by the wind, general movement of the person lying on the towel or by people walking on the towel. Additionally, this invention supplies, via its changeable top (head member), a means to display advertising and/or a symbol of the user's personal interests. This additional functionality is accomplished by replacing the head member with a different head member, which is discussed in the specification.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:**

A more complete understanding of the present invention may be obtained from consideration of the following description in conjunction with the drawings, of which:

FIG.1 is a side elevation view illustrating the device comprising the stake member, the clip member, the head member and the elastic joining member.

FIG.2 is a perspective view of the stake member.

FIG.3 is a side elevation view of the clip member.

FIG.4a is a top plan view of the clip member.

FIG.4b is a top-down plan view of the lower arm of the clip member.

FIG.5 is a side elevation view of the generic head member.

FIG.6 shows a perspective view of a head member in the likeness of a football.

FIG.7 shows a side view of a head member in the likeness of a character.

FIG.8 shows a perspective view of a head member in the form of a geometric shape.

FIG.9 shows a perspective view of a head member in the form of an advertisement for an Acme widget (An Acme widget being a non-existent entity, used here for illustrative purposes only)

FIG.10 shows a side view of a head member with the appearance of a baseball.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION:

Referring to FIG.1, the beach blanket/towel retaining device is comprised of a stake 10, a clamp 26, a removable/changeable head member 20 and an elastic connecting member 18. The body of the stake 10 is comprised of 4 longitudinal ribs 10d that are joined at a central vertical axis. The ribs 10d of the body of the stake 10 are tapered toward, and terminate at, the bottom end 10a of the stake, which is reasonably rounded for safety. The upper end 10b of the stake is cylindrical and has a threaded recess 16. The integration of the threaded recess 16 into the cylindrical upper end 10b of the body of the stake creates a rim 10c.

Still referring to FIG.1, one of the ribs 10d has formed into it a vertical slot 14, which provides the vertical tolerance for variances in the depth of soils into which the stake can be driven. The vertical slot 14 has an upper end 14a and a lower end 14b. The upper end 14a is positioned a sufficient distance below the cylindrical upper end 10b of the stake so as to avoid structural failure at the point of intersection 10e of the ribs 10d of the body of the stake 10 and the cylindrical upper end 10b of the stake. The stake 10 is connected to the clip 26 by a length of elastic cord 18, rope or other means of attachment that is elastic in nature, thereby providing a means of flexibly conjoining the clip 26 to the stake 10 and the resiliency to return the retained subject to its original position if disturbed. The elastic cord 18 connects the clip 26 to the stake 10 via the vertical slot 14 of the stake and the opening 25 in the lower arm 26c of the clip 26.

Referring now to FIG.2, the rim 10c and the threaded recess 16 of the cylindrical upper end 10b of the stake are clearly visible. FIG.3 shows a side elevation view of the clip, wherein the upper clip arm 26b of the clip is joined to the lower clip arm 26c by a resilient connecting member 28. FIG.4a shows a top plan view of the upper clip arm 26b. FIG.4b shows a top-down plan view of the lower clip arm 26c, which illustrates the ribbing 26a of the lower clip. Similar ribbing on the upper clip arm 26b is not shown. The ribbing 26a provides a means for gripping the beach towel. FIG.4b also show the opening 25 through which the elastic cord 18 is connected. The upper clip arm 26b and the lower clip arm 26c are identical components mirrored about the resilient connecting member 28.

Referring to FIG.5, the present invention includes a removable/changeable head member 20 having at its bottom a mammalian protrusion 24 that further is threaded 24a so as to removably mate with the threaded recess 16 of the cylindrical upper end 10b of the stake 10. The removable/changeable head member 20 represented by FIG.5 is generic in nature.

FIG.6 thru FIG.10 show samples of possible differently appearing removable/changeable head members. Head members may differ in size, shape, color or other characteristics of appearance and each necessarily will have in common the mammalian protrusion 24 at the bottom, so as to mate with the stake as described previously. The bottom of the head member is defined as that side of the head member possessing the mammalian protrusion 24. FIG.6 is representative of a football, serving to illustrate a possible user's interest in football. Likewise, FIG.10 is a baseball serving the same purpose as the football of FIG.6. FIG.7 is the possible likeness of a character and is not limited by the appearance of FIG.7. FIG.8 is a basic geometric shape and can be any other geometric shape. FIG.9 is a representation of an Acme Widget, a fictitious product, for the purpose of advertising the Acme Widget product.